

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

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IMPRESSIONS OF EDWARD STRATEMEYER; or, STRATEMEYER — THE MAN

By Jack T. Dizer



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #243

CLOVER SERIES

Publisher: Street & Smith, 25 to 31 Rose St., New York. Issues: 134 (Highest number seen advertised). Dates: June 23, 1894, to Jan. 16, 1897. Schedule: Weekly. Pages: 250 to 300. Size: 7 3/8 x 5". Price: 25 cents. Illustrations: Colored designed cover with centered portrait of young lady. Contents: Romances by Mrs. Georgie Sheldon, Bertha M. Clay, Julia Edwards and others mostly reprinted from serials appearing in *New York Weekly*.

IMPRESSIONS OF EDWARD STRATEMEYER; or, STRATEMEYER — THE MAN*

By Jack T. Dizer

This paper is a brief examination of Edward Stratemeyer as based on deductions from his writings. Until recent years very little of any substance was written about either Edward Stratemeyer or the Stratemeyer Syndicate. What appeared in print was often colored by acrimony and controversy. Since, as we know, much literary research is a selective re-statement of earlier material, a number of myths have been created and perpetuated. It is possible to do reasonable detective work about Stratemeyer the man by exploring the body of his writings and examining them for evidence of his attitudes on many subjects and for a better perspective on the man himself.

In order to illustrate acrimony and controversy with regard to Stratemeyer and his Literary Syndicate let me give you some quotes over about a 60 year span. You may cheer your hero or hiss the villain.

Milwaukee Sentinel, 1904, review of Stratemeyer's Colonial Series: "The author, Edward Stratemeyer, has used his usual care in matters of historical detail and accuracy, and gives a splendid picture of the times in general." (Hurrah!)

Correy Ford, April, 1928, *New Age Illustrated*: "Edward Stratemeyer is sixty-six years of age. He has whitish-grey hair, a florid complexion, and a slight Ed Wynn lisp. Wearing a shiny black sack-coat and benign spectacles, like a Lutheran deacon, he dictates his stories to a stenographer in a severe, barren office-room on the 18th floor of a New York skyscraper ... The walls of this strange room are lined with shelves, and ...filled with a complete collection of the first editions of the Rover Boys...(Ford lists both major series and single titles), an imposing roster of the leading juvenile fiction of over a quarter century." (Hurrah!)

Fortune, April, 1934: "And the 'great juvenile' he (Stratemeyer) was always going to write was forever lost in the deluge of his 20,000,000 pot-boilers that bestow upon him the fame of a colossus he never wanted to be." (Sob, sob.)

Hope White, in *Illinois Libraries*, October, 1934: "...one man wrote or conceived for others to write more than eight hundred of this type of book (Tom Swift and Nancy Drew). That same gentleman holds the all-time record for quantity production of one man's work... This arch-fiend was none other than Edward Stratemeyer... There is no need to enumerate...the undesirable features of these series. We have all been preaching and acting against them as long as we have been librarians—perhaps longer. Although we may not express ourselves as forcefully or colorfully as Anthony Comstock, we can sympathize with him when he said that "the love story and cheap works of fiction...are devices of Satan to capture our youth." (Boo-Hiss, Hiss.)

George Dunlap (of G&D), 1937, *THE FLEETING YEARS*: "Stratemeyer was a genius in his way, using several different pen names for his own work, and in addition to that had numerous other clever writers on his staff, both men and women, who turned out book after book, not always of the highest quality, but always having that something in them which appealed to the youngsters." (Hurrah, sort of.)

*Paper presented at ACA conference, March, 1990, at Toronto, Canada.

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Dora V. Smith, 1960, FIFTY YEARS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS: "Then came the syndicate for mass production of cheap juveniles. Tom Swift celebrated his fiftieth anniversary in 1960, having apparently thrown down the glove to English teachers and librarians as early as 1910...Edward Stratemeyer had formed his syndicate to turn out boys books on a mass production bases. "...He wrote some one hundred and sixty books under syndicate pseudonyms, fifty or so under his own name, and devised plots for about eight hundred others which were farmed out to hired hacks." (Boo, hiss, hiss.) And these quotes are by no means extreme examples of either cheers or hisses.

You might think that standard biographical references or information from the Syndicate itself would be more factual and objective but not so. No biographical references list the early works or most of the dime novels which Stratemeyer wrote. The references differ in the pen names which he used and the titles he authored and don't even agree as to when the Syndicate was organized. The information from the Syndicate is no better. In October, 1963, Mr. Andrew Svenson, then a partner in the Syndicate wrote to me, "Edward Stratemeyer was the founder of the so-called 'Fifty Center' in 1910. As a young man he had a burning desire to write. This did not please his father, who wanted him to go into the commercial field. Edward secretly wrote his first story, "Victor Horton's Idea," on brown wrapping paper in 1889, and sent it to *Golden Days*. His success in the field of children's literature was immediate. He went on to write over four hundred titles, innumerable short stories, and to direct the story development of more than one thousand books in all before his death in 1930." I believe we could show, partly through Stratemeyer's own writings, that practically every statement is suspect.

Stratemeyer's early biographical history as to dates, locations, ancestry and education seems factual. He was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1862. If "Victor Horton's Idea" was his first short story he must have been 27 when he wrote it on "brown wrapping paper." This is an unusually late start for a writer, particularly one who was so prolific in later years. It now appears that we can identify at least five items either copyrighted, published or at least written before 1889.

The earliest is a story appearing in *Our American Boys*, published in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and dated January, 1883. It is by "Ed. Ward," and entitled "Harry's Trial." The copy containing the story is in the Stratemeyer-Adams collection in the University of Oregon Library and was apparently donated by his daughter, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams. Ed. Ward is a known penname of Stratemeyer and was used in later years as well. D. A. Johnson has kindly provided me with a copy of the story and it is an interesting example of the writing of a 20 year old boy in 1882.

It is certainly not great literature but has the earmarks of Stratemeyer's later style. The hero is a "stout boy of 15" with a widowed mother. He is a hard-working errand boy who is victimized by a counterfeit bill given him by the head clerk. The head clerk is exposed and discharged and Harry became second clerk. "A situation that he still occupies." At least it is obvious that Stratemeyer was writing for publication six to seven years before the brown paper caper.

A second example of early Stratemeyer writing can be found in the libretto of LOVE'S MAZE, a comic opera in two acts, copyrighted in 1887 by Edward and Louis Charles Stratemeyer. The records, at the moment at least, do not show whether or not the opera was performed but the libretto is well printed and is also witty. As the lovers part Dick says, "So don't weep. You will think of me sometimes?" And Amy replies, "Always. I can have your portrait done in crayon for four dollars, or two for seven,

and I'll make Theophilus get two; one for over the parlor mantel, and the other for upstairs." She is not only romantic but always thinking of the buck! Strains of Stratemeyer, indeed. Some of the dialogue is also reminiscent of Songbird Powell's poetry as it appeared a few years later in the Rover Boys.

Last summer Peter Walther uncovered evidence of two other Stratemeyer brother collaborations at the Library of Congress. One is a comic opera, *AMY AND DICK*. The title was deposited November 8, 1886. The other is a Comic Novelty Opera, *THE PERFUME PRINCE*, and that title was deposited February 25, 1888. This shows three operetta before "Victor Horton," always assuming the titles represented different works. Since *LOVE'S MAZE* features Amy and Dick and we do not have a libretto of *AMY AND DICK*, we cannot be sure one is not a revision of the other.

The last item of which I am aware is a story in manuscript called "Crele," by Arthur M. Winfield, with a date August 13, 1885. Above the title is a signature, Edward Stratemeyer, Jan. 21, 22, 23, 1885. We have no knowledge as to whether this was ever printed. The story was written on lined paper, (not brown wrapping paper) and is also noticeable for the use of the Arthur M. Winfield name as early as January, 1885. The story begins, "Crele was very happy. Crele, just seventeen years old, with her soft, liquid eyes and her treasure of deep brown hair, that served as but a releaf [sic] for her rosy lips and...ruddy cheeks..." The two inferences we can draw from this beginning is that it was not a boys adventure story and secondly, that Edward was noticing girls. Another inference from these early works seems to be that since the Stratemyers were serious enough about writing to have deposited three titles at the Library of Congress and had at least one libretto well printed there was not as much parental opposition to their writing as the histories state.

It is therefore certain that Stratemeyer was writing in several genres during the 1880s and it is also certain that he continued to write in various genres for at least 15 additional years and perhaps longer. We know that after "Victor Horton's Idea," in 1889, Stratemeyer submitted numerous stories for boys to various publishers including *Argosy*, *Golden Days*, *Holiday*, and later *Good News*. As to when he started writing dime novels we have only the evidence of publisher's records, his reasonably authenticated pen names and the Library of Congress.

We have identified at least sixty-five dime novels written for adults from 1890 on. These stories covered a variety of themes typical of dime novel fare. Examples are: O'BRIEN, *THE BUNCO KING*; OR, NAT WOODS' *CAPTURE OF AN ALL AROUND CROOK*, with a sequel authored by Louis C. Stratemeyer, Edward's half brother. *DEAD SHOT DAVE (THE CARD WIZARD OF THE MISSISSIPPI)* is an honest gambler with nerves of steel, a dead shot and a righter of wrongs.

An inclusive approach in examining Stratemeyer should examine both the dime novels and even larger number of juvenile stories, all published before 1900, in order to gather impressions of his knowledge and fields of interest. We could even include, tangentially at least, the Edna Winfield books for females, but space prohibits. Looking at the mass of writing we can immediately make two observations. The first, and this has yet to be authenticated, is that, based on the large number of stories printed in the early 1890s Stratemeyer must have been doing more writing in the 1880s than we have evidence for. The second is that, while Stratemeyer undoubtedly wrote what the publisher asked for, he had both an interest and ability in several areas. I will not discuss the numerous examples of adventure stories, wild west stories and the like which were typical of the periodicals for which they were written but which don't

really say much about Stratemeyer. There are several themes, however, which do appear regularly in Stratemeyer's writings and seem to speak to the man, himself. It seems logical, therefore, to briefly examine six of these themes.

The first is detection. Stratemeyer wrote 22 Nick Carter Detective Stories for Street & Smith, 11 detective novels for the Old Cap Collier Library of Norman Munroe and, apparently, FLYER FRED, THE CYCLIST FERRET; OR, RUNNING DOWN THE ROUGH AND READY RASCALS for Beadle and Adams. For his boy audience in *Good News* he wrote "For His Honor's Sake; or, The Richest Boy Detective in New York." He also wrote innumerable stories of all types where the hero used various methods of detection to solve matters of birth, family, or lost wealth. This type of plot was prevalent in the 1890s, but it does seem to show a basic interest in mystery and detection. While I find no evidence that Stratemeyer personally wrote any of the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drews, it is easy to see his continuing interest in detective fiction. His Nick Carters read well and it was not known until recently that they were written by Stratemeyer and not by Frederick Dey.

A second popular theme is sports. In reading Stratemeyer's early sports stories serials it is hard for me to get a clear sense of either his interest or knowledge. Even though Stratemeyer was editor of *Young Sports of America*, in 1895-96, he wrote little about team sports. "Football Dan; or, Pluck, Not Luck," had plenty of pluck and some luck but not much football. "The Schooldays of Fred Harley; or, Rivals for All Honors," an 1894 *Good News* serial, also had football but a rather anemic description of the sport. There were lots of sports described in various stories, such as boat races, running, ice boating and skating but the sports tended to be more individual activities. There was the usual Stratemeyer emphasis on manliness, courage, personal fitness and, of course, victory, but little of the Frank Merriwell team emphasis and description. Of course at this time there wasn't the over-blown hysteria typical of modern sports and Frank Merriwell didn't even appear until 1896.

One individual sport which apparently interested Stratemeyer was bicycling. In the 1890s bicycling was intensely popular and Stratemeyer wrote both adult and juvenile cycling stories. I have mentioned "Flyer Fred, The Cyclist Ferret." "Jack and Jerry, The Bicycle Wonders; or, Lively Times on the Wheel," have lively times indeed in four *New York 5¢ Library* stories. They avoid all sorts of disasters, inflict righteous retribution on assorted villains and make a good deal of money as well. Jack's last name is Speedwell and he may well be the progenitor of the Speedwell Boys of later Syndicate fame. "Joe Johnson, The Bicycle Wonder; or Riding for the Championship of the World" was a *Young Sports of America* juvenile story which Stratemeyer reprinted in his own magazine and later published in hardcover. Even though Stratemeyer tried to use specifics, for example, "Mark took Marie skating and tried the outer curve, the Dutch roll, and several other fancy movements." I find little evidence that Stratemeyer was either a dedicated athlete or even a particularly knowledgeable one.

Another theme which occurs several times in a most favorable light, and rather an unusual theme for juvenile stories, is the theatre. "A Footlight Favorite; or, Born to be an Actor" (*Good News*, 1895) is representative. Mark Dale thinks "the profession of an actor is as legitimate as that of—a lawyer—." I think he could have used a better example even though Mark was addressing his lawyer guardian. Later on my opinion, possibly Stratemeyer's and certainly Mark's was vindicated when the lawyer/guardian is proven to be a thorough scoundrel. The story is full of

rather well-documented detail which shows that Stratemeyer not only knew the theatre but had a favorable opinion of it. In the story Stratemeyer goes into details also of the money owed, earned and inherited which often appears in his early stories and is also reminiscent of Alger. Mark started out as a "walk on" but soon progressed to speaking parts and became a star. He was told, "You must be one of those to elevate the stage and make it worthy of a high place in the estimation of the public." Even though Mark was reunited with his father's estate of 50-60 thousand dollars he continued on the stage and "his triumph on the Pacific Coast was as great as it had been in the East." Stratemeyer included such very specific details about touring routes, stage secrets, problems with bill posting as well as theatres and travelling that he seems to have had an interest in the theatre, a knowledge of the theatre and very definitely an approval of the theatre.

Another strong Stratemeyer theme is engineering-invention-science fiction. Starting with the 1892 JACK THE INVENTOR; OR, THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF A YOUNG MACHINIST, and continuing with THE ELECTRIC AIR AND WATER WIZARD, OVERHEAD STEVE; OR, THE WIZARD OF THE WIRES, JOE THE SURVEYOR; OR, THE VALUE OF A LOST CLAIM, THE WIZARD OF THE DEEP; OR, OVER AND UNDER THE OCEAN IN SEARCH OF THE \$1,000,000 PEARL, BOUND TO BE AN ELECTRICIAN; OR, A CLEAR HEAD AND A STOUT HEART, and HOLLAND, THE DESTROYER; OR, SOLVING A MYSTERY OF THE PAST, as examples, these stories show a strong and continuing interest in things mechanical and electrical. It would appear that both the Great Marvels series and Tom Swift were natural extensions of this interest.

We know Stratemeyer had an early interest in music from the evidence of the comic operas written by the Stratemeyer brothers. Music, or the performing of music appears in various stories in a favorable light and especially in THE YOUNG BANDMASTER; OR, CONCERT, STAGE AND BATTLEFIELD. The hero, thrown on his own with "health, strength, and a capital of sixty-five cents," plus his cornet, became a musician, in fact a notable cornet player and bandmaster. He is famous "for having composed half a dozen stirring military marches and popular airs, and these have brought him in considerable cash."

Stratemeyer seems ever conscious of money, the last theme on which I am going to comment, and has a firm belief that a laborer is worthy of his hire, or a little bit more. The hero seldom accepts the first offer but usually dickers. When the young bandmaster was on his uppers with 65¢ and his cornet he was offered a job for \$2 but talked himself into \$4 and his supper. Many of Stratemeyer's stories give specifics as to meal and hotel costs, how to save money and the virtue of keeping one's eyes peeled for money-making opportunities. Although this was a common theme in the 1890s, Stratemeyer espoused it perhaps more vigorously than many and apparently followed his own precepts. Many of his stories have money titles or themes, i.e. STOLEN GOLD; OR, THE BRIGHTEST MESSENGER IN BOSTON, MISSING MONEY; OR, THE YOUNG BANK MESSENGER'S DISCOVERY, and THE TIN BOX MYSTERY; OR, THE STOLEN RAILROAD BONDS. In fact, I can't find a single story where the hero had less money at the end of the tale than when he started. You lived right, took advantage of your opportunities and you made money. Some of it may have come from a wrongfully withheld inheritance, but you worked for it and it was yours.

It is obvious that briefly discussing six recurrent themes only scratches the surface. We could show evidence of Stratemeyer's attitude toward strikers (somewhat ambivalent but generally hostile), his attitude toward artists, florists and auctioneers (favorable), towards minorities (quite liberal for the times), and toward women (friendly and respectful

but definitely not liberated) but it would take a book to do it. We should probably emphasize the recurrent themes which run through almost all the stories, that the virtues of clean living, self reliance, determination, integrity and ambition can only result in success for those with these virtues. There is no doubt that this is what his audience wanted to hear but I find every evidence that Edward Stratemeyer thoroughly believed it himself.

* * * * *

REPORT FROM TORONTO

By Randy Cox

On March 10, 1990, the seventh annual meeting of the Dime Novel Area of the American Culture Association convened in the Boardroom of the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for four sessions using the annual joint conference of said Association and the Popular Culture Association as both an excuse to meet and a base of operations. Our members arrived on varying days, depending on their ability to get away from their homes and/or academic institutions, and other factors. Those who were able to take in the entire four day conference (March 7-10) report the usual "eclectic circus" of topics and formats, as well as the opportunity to sample some of the attractions, book stores, and cuisine of a truly cosmopolitan city. For the present I will confine myself to an account of the Dime Novel Area and its activities.

The first session (commencing at 10:30 a.m.) was called "Experience, Roles, and Public Access" in an attempt to cover the variety of topics represented by the three participants. It was chaired by yours truly who introduced the first panelist, Lydia Cushman Schurman, whose topic was "The American News Company and Its Distribution of Story Papers and Dime Novels." The program book abstract reads: "The single most important factor which guaranteed the success of story papers and dime novels in 19th-century America was the organization in 1864 and subsequent development of the American News Company. This paper will describe how the news company publicized, promoted, and distributed these forms of popular entertainment fiction." This paper is part of her ongoing study of what she appropriately calls the Dime Novel Publishing World...and how different that publishing world was from any other at the time. [Since many of these papers will appear in the pages of *Dime Novel Roundup* in the coming months, I will not discuss any at length, but give you a preview.]

In the absence of Arlene Moore (whose paper, "The Tomboy is a Lady; or, Papa's Pet, Mother's Despair," has been promised to us for a later hearing), Link Hullar made some comments on the role of women in the pulp magazines, in particular Pat Savage from the DOC SAVAGE series and Rosabelle Newton from THE AVENGER. He has promised to expand on this theme for next year's conference.

Jim Evans, from the University of Texas, Pan American, continued his fascinating studies of regional dime novels by discussing the work of Prentiss Ingraham in "Prentiss Ingraham's Dime Novels Based on His Experiences in the Cuban War for Independence." To quote the abstract in the Program Book: "Before his prolific career as a dime novelist, Prentiss Ingraham fought in the Cuban war for independence from Spain. This paper discusses his writings about the conflict; it especially analyzes Ingraham's use of personal experiences in the Cuban army, in the Cuban navy, and as a prisoner of the Spaniards."

The focus of the second session (12:30-2:00 p.m.) was "Edward Stratemeyer and His Steam-Driven Fiction Factory." This was a first for our

group in having enough papers on one topic to constitute a theme panel. Chaired by Jack Dizer, the three presentations examined different aspects of Stratemeyer's life, career, and publications. Deidre Johnson read a chapter from her dissertation-in-progress on Stratemeyer, "Scamps, Sports, and Sleuths: The Dime Novel Heroes of Edward Stratemeyer." Program abstract: "A look at Edward Stratemeyer's dime novel fiction, tracing changes and prevalent traits in the protagonists. While some elements of Stratemeyer's later boys' books can be seen in these early writings, his dime novel heroes tend to be less straightlaced and more removed from society than their series book counterparts."

Bill Gowen's slide presentation dramatically traced the history of "Stratemeyer's Garden City Publishing Venture and How It Grew" (or, as Bill demonstrated, how it failed to grow). Program abstract: "Although modern paperbacks reach wide audiences through low-cost editions of popular hardcovers, Edward Stratemeyer, a marketing genius for juvenile fiction, found only limited success with a 1926 arrangement to publish paperbacks of his own Syndicate series books. We will offer a close illustrated examination of this short-lived publishing venture."

Jack Dizer's succinctly titled paper "Stratemeyer the Man" was a model of scholarly speculation using Stratemeyer's own works to suggest the key incidents and factors in the man's own life. Program abstract: "This paper is an examination of the life of Edward Stratemeyer, writer and creator of the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate. It explores the influences on his writings and his own attitudes towards youth."

Session Number Three: "Adventurers All: On Land, Sea, Air, and Foreign Shores," (2:30-4:00) was chaired by myself in the absence of Eddie LeBlanc. The first speaker, Kirk Vaughan, was unable to attend, but his paper was read by myself in Vaughan's absence: "Pioneer of Aviation Series Books: Harry L. Sayler and the Airship Boys." Program abstract: "Harry L. Sayler was a pioneer of the aviation series genre. Prolific author (25 books written from 1909-1913), and creator of four separate series, Sayler combined technical knowledge with expertise in natural history to set a high standard for subsequent aviation series books."

Link Hullar's "Doc Savage and American History" was not the first paper on a pulp magazine theme read for this group. (Last year, Al Tonik talked about his experiences tracking down the real authors behind the "Jackson Cole" house name used in *Texas Rangers* magazine.) Program abstract: "An examination of the career of Clark ("Doc") Savage, Jr., within the context of American history. With an emphasis on the great depression, the era of Doc's creation, this paper explores his relationship to the society of his times and offers some insights into the character's enduring popularity."

My own contribution was "Nicholas Carter, Detective?" Program abstract: "Just how much of Nick Carter's success as the great New York detective is due to real detective work and how much to agility and pure chance? Representative novels in this long series are examined to demonstrate Carter's method of deductive reasoning and crime solving."

Our fourth session (4:30-6:00 p.m.) was our regular discussion, "A Dime Novel Roundup, Prospects for Progress," in which we considered "the current state of research into the Dime Novel and related literature and suggested patterns for the future." Each of us contributed a progress report on his or her own research projects. The most significant decision was to expand the group by changing its name to Dime Novel/Series Books/Pulps and to encourage themes for panels in the future around a central topic to be explored in all three forms: such as, the role of women in dime novels, series books, and pulps. Since next year's session will be

in San Antonio, the possibility of topics about Texas or the Alamo in dime novels would be a natural one. Other topics will be found listed on the Call for Papers that accompanies this report.

With the *Dime Novel Roundup* now indexed in the *MLA Bibliography*, Jim Evans agreed to look into the possibility of having it included in some of the other standard library indexes of periodicals. Bill Gowen offered to produce slides to enhance future presentations if individuals need same to accompany their papers.

Some concern was expressed about the scheduling of next year's conference. The 1991 meeting for the ACA/PCA falls during Holy Week (the conference is scheduled for March 27-30, 1991; Easter is Sunday, March 31, 1991). While some were uncertain about their ability to attend, we hope to attract some new blood and that enough of the old guard will return to make the eighth session as successful as the seventh.

Once again I would like to encourage as many as possible to attend the San Antonio conference to sample our sessions, join us in discussion, and even informally present some of your own ideas. You need not belong to the American Culture Association or the Popular Culture Association to stop by to say hello. You need not register for the full convention either, but you may decide you want to. Further questions should be addressed to my home address: 10331 Decker Ave., Northfield, MN 55057, or call 507 645-5711.

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THREE LETTERS FROM GILBERT PATTEN

(From the Collection of E. Michael Saavedra)

GILBERT PATTEN CORPORATION

PUBLISHERS
SALMON TOWER
11 WEST 42nd STREET
NEW YORK
PHONE: LONGACRE 1598

Feb. 27, 1931.

Mr. Robert H. Smeltzer,
3432 N. Bodine Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Smeltzer:---

Will you be good enough to express my appreciation and thanks to the Brotherhood of Dime Novel Fans of the U.S.A. for their kind wishes. It was thoughtful and cheering of you to write your letter conveying the sentiment.

Let me explain that my attempt to bring back the Dime Novel apparently did not lack support by the admirers of that style of fiction, as the sales of the first issue seem to have been satisfactory, and I feel quite certain that the publication would have reached a paying basis in a very short time. In fact, a final check-up, which has not yet been made, may show that the first issue reached a sale that gave assurance of profits on succeeding issues. Considering the business depression, such a result must be regarded as remarkable.

The suspension of our publications was the result of our backer getting into a very bad jam which left us with no financial support. Capital was timid, and my efforts to save the day and carry on came to naught. I could get plenty of credit on paper and printing, but the cash needed to continue with authors, artists, engravers, and to take care of office rent, etc., was not to be obtained in time to prevent the suspen-

sion. However, no one but me will lose a dollar by the venture.

In the current issue of the Saturday Evening Post you can find the first of two articles by me which tell the story of my career as a writer of dime novel fiction. This story, of course, is sketchy, as it was not possible to tell it as I wished to do in the limited space allowed me. Some time, maybe, if I can interest the right sort of publishers, I'll write the complete story for book publication.

I would like, also, to put out a cloth edition de lux of the twelve best Merriwell stories, selected from the 208 volumes---as now published in paper---which I wrote. I would wish to edit, revise and somewhat modernize the stories. Then I'd like to see them put out in a handsome binding, the paper, presswork and artwork to be first class in every respect. I think such an edition could be pretty widely distributed on a subscription plan of easy monthly payments. Of course it would have to be a set that would adorn any library, such a set as old and new readers would be proud to own.

Do you mind giving me your honest opinion---and I really mean your *honest* opinion--of such a plan?

My permanent address is

Hudson View Gardens,
Apt. G-24. New York City.

Sincerely yours,
Gilbert Patten.

* * *

Hudson View Gardens,
New York City, March 12, 1931.

Mr. Robert H. Smelzer,
3432 N. Brodine Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Smeltzer:---

Thank you for the copies of Happy Hours that came with yours of March 10. They were very interesting.

At the present time I'm swamped with letters from readers of the Post's articles, which may---must---delay me in writing the appreciation you have asked for. You see, I want to answer every one of these letters, and each one requires a different sort of an answer, which makes it some job. It's impossible merely to say "thank you," and let it go at that. The letters are impulsively sincere and warm, and the generosity and kindness of the writers place me under obligation to show them my appreciation by proper replies. However, I'll get around to following your suggestion as soon as I can.

I believe I still owe Mr. Ralph P. Smith an answer to his last letter, which I received at a time when I was fighting to save my magazines. I was in such a jam at the time that I couldn't find an opportunity to reply to him, and I don't know what became of his letter. I intend, however, to drop him a line within a few days.

It's really impossible for me to choose off-hand and without considerable re-examination of the Merriwells what books are the best twelve of the series. In any case, the stories would demand much editing, cutting, revision and rewriting. Mr. William E. Barrett, an author who lives in St. Louis, claims I reached my peak in No. 142, Dick Merriwell, Freshman, which, together with some eight or ten previous volumes, were the best of the series. But of course I would select---or try to select---representative yarns covering different stages of Frank and Dick's entire

career. This would still leave the paper volumes for anybody who might want all the stories as originally written.

The Post articles seem to have kicked up quite a lot of interest. So much that I'm growing more confident that a painstaking book on the dime novel, a book covering the ground with care and as much thoroughness as possible, would meet with considerable success. It would be necessary to give much time, research and construction labor to the preparation of such a book. In other words, it would be a real man-size job. I'd like to do it, but it would be necessary for me to be in position to take the time and perform the labor.

If you, yourself, can find the time and are so inclined you can do me a favor by writing a personal letter to Mr. George Horace Lorimer, Editor of The Post, expressing your views regarding the appearance of my articles in that publication. Editors are always glad to get the reactions of their readers. Of course it will be well *not* to give him the impression that you are in touch with me, although I leave that entirely to your judgment. On second thought, I'm inclined to think it would be better to begin by saying you have written me and have decided to write him to let him know, also, how you feel about it. I believe you will get a personal reply from Mr. Lorimer. Yes, the latter is the better way, because it is thoroughly straightforward and honest. I'd rather you wouldn't follow my first suggestion, but you need not state that I suggested your writing him.

You may be sure I'll gladly autograph the dime novel book if I ever do it. I shall consider that you are doing me an honor by asking me to autograph it.

With kind regards.

Sincerely yours,

Gilbert Patten.

* * *

Hudson View Gardens,
New York City, April 15,
1931.

Dear Mr. Smeltzer:---

Have been pushed so hard of late by a number of things that I haven't found time to answer your last letter.

Oh, things appear ready to break right. I have three business appointments for today. When these deals start to crack all of them are liable to pop wide open and swamp us.

Ralph Smith writes me that Top Notch is starting a new Merriwell "ghost" yarn. S. & S. still cling to the conviction that anybody who can write a story can knock off a Merriwell tale that'll fool the readers. I hope this latest effort to deceive is so bad that it will draw a bunch of protesting letters. Top Notch has a new editor. Doubtlessly he's confident that he can get away with the same old gag.

Thank you for writing SEP about more stuff from me. By and by, if I get some of my deals to working I'd like to slip over another Post article for the publicity value.

Yours sincerely,

Gil Patten.

* * * * *

A MERRIWELL GENEALOGY;
OR, "YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS WITHOUT A SCORECARD"

By Roaring Mike, The Headhunter From Hard-Pan

The incredible Merriwell epic first appeared before the public in 1896 between the covers of Street & Smith's first colored-cover nickel library. It continued in weekly installments until 1915, and sporadically thereafter in Street & Smith's pulp magazines. Two hundred forty-five "thick books" were required to reprint most, but not all, of the original adventures which first graced the pages of *Tip Top Weekly*.

The chief chronicler of the brothers Merriwell, born William George Patten, in Corinna, Maine, in 1866, preferred to call himself Gilbert Patten (when he wasn't calling himself William West Wilder, "Wyoming Will," Herbert Bellwood, or Burt L. Standish). He died in Vista, California, in 1945.

Like Sherlock Holmes' Boswell, Dr. John Watson (a.k.a. Dr. Doyle), Mr. Patten occasionally dropped a few tantalizing clues about Frank Merriwell's somewhat shadowy background, nearly as nebulous as that of the great consulting detective.

Merriwell's activities after 1896 were presented in such great detail that no sleuthing is required. Patten even provided a brief glimpse of the ex-Yale athlete in 1941, in the unsuccessful MR. FRANK MERRIWELL.

Enough preliminaries!

FRANK HARRISON* MERRIWELL (1880-1945) was the only son of CHARLES CONRAD (HARTON) MERRIWELL (ca. 1850-1901) and his first wife FRANCES(?) Harrison (d. ca. 1887).

After his wife's death, Charles Conrad Merriwell left his son in the care of his brother, ASHER DOW MERRIWELL (ca. 1837-1896) and went west to seek his fortune in the mining regions. While on his odyssey, he married "A WESTERN LADY" and had another son, RICHARD MERRIWELL (ca. 1888-1933). Unbeknownst to anyone, he had merely repeated a similar matrimonial liaison of his brother's. ASHER D. MERRIWELL had secretly married "A SPANISH LADY" and had a son, CARLOS MERRIWELL (ca. 1878-1898), who grew up to break his father's heart, and act as a murderous doppelganger to his cousin.

In the fullness of time, Frank Merriwell discovered young ladies, and strung several of them along throughout his prep school, college, and travelling days. In 1905 he married INZA BURRAGE, of Fardale (ca. 1881-1945), and had two children; a boy, FRANK MERRIWELL, JR. ("CHIP"), born in 1906, and shot down over Germany in 1943, and a girl, BART MERRIWELL (1923-1945), named after Bartley Hodge, her father's oldest friend and former enemy.

RICHARD MERRIWELL, who was raised by a wierd assortment of "genuine" Western characters, was eventually tamed by his big brother, went to Fardale and Yale, and married his worst enemy's sister, JUNE ARLINGTON, the daughter of D. ROSCOE ARLINGTON.

Frank had in-laws, too. Inza's brother, WALTER BURRAGE, was a cadet at Fardale Academy. Their father, BERNARD BURRAGE, had more money than common sense, and tried to marry off Inza to a slimy wastrel nobleman, in fin-de-siècle fashion.

At least one of Asher Merriwell's "Spanish lady's" relatives survived to the period of the saga: Dick's "dark-eyed cousin Felicia," the companion of his childhood.

*Frank Merriwell's middle name, Harrison, is given when he is awardec the Congressional Lifesaving Medal for twice rescuing Inza Burrage from Certain Death.

From time to time the Merriwell brothers allowed Mr. Patten to record certain pertinent data. For example, we learn in FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAULT (*Tip Top* #5) that our hero has a compulsory weakness for gambling, and once robbed his mother's purse to pay his debts. In FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAME (*Medal Library* #308), he reminisced that "I was born puny, and for a year it seemed that I might die any time. My mother was a semi-invalid ...she feared I would be like her..."

"She placed me in the care of a physician, who used nature's remedies, instead of keeping me full of medicine...proper exercise, proper food, plenty of fresh air..."

This can only be a disciple of the eccentric British physician, Dr. Gordon Stables, whose pithy "Take a cold tub, Sir!" cured countless Victorian boys of "nervousness."

In FRANK MERRIWELL'S SECRET (*Tip Top* #86), Frank reveals his personal brand of theology: "practical" Christianity, as he attempts to reform New Haven's "greasy, blear-eyed, besotted wretches of the gutter."

Not only do the principal characters have families and backgrounds, but likewise the supporting cast, both friends and foes, until the series as a whole swarms with Byzantine relationships. Is it any wonder that the Merriwell stories attracted a huge following in its heyday, and even now, some ninety-four years after Frank Merriwell stepped off the train at Fardale station, a few of us maverick collectors still appreciate Gil Paten's fully-fleshed alternate universe?

* * * * *

LETTERS

Interesting to see what influence childhood books have on people. In the 1989 Prima book DON SHERWOOD: THE LIFE & TIMES OF 'THE WORLD'S GREATEST DISC JOCKEY,' Laurie Harper writes: "On his show...Don frequently read stories to his audience, such as the adventures of his beloved Tom Swift or the Rover Boys. What he did wasn't, of course, straight reading. In addition to his voice imitations, he gave new meaning to well known stories through innuendo and his throaty, dirty laugh." Laid up in bed for a year as a kid, Sherwood had made believe: "I was Tarzan, Tom Swift, Winnie the Pooh." As an adult on radio, he simply continued that, though with tongue in cheek. Memorably summing up why people love stories, Don Sherwood once wrote his daughter Robin: "Because, understandably, the world overwhelms them, most people want desperately for magic things to be true."

John M. Enright
1624 The Alameda, Room 36
San Jose, CA 95126-2313

* * *

At my age, 87, time ain't what it used to be, and the first thing you know the subscription time has come. I'm glad you are still keeping alive the legends and the lore of the 19th century juvenile literature.

My typing isn't as fast nor my handwriting as Spenserian as when I started newspaper work way back in 1923. I've enjoyed the *Dime Novel Round-up* in the many I've been a member, and I hope you continue as editor for many years yet.

David Soibelman
119 S. Harper Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90048

* * * * *

ALLEN CHAPMAN'S BOUND TO RISE; OR, THE BOYS OF SPRING HILL

By Jack T. Dizer

Rich Chenu recently sent me a most interesting book, BOUND TO RISE, by Allen Chapman, Mershon edition. Its full title is BOUND TO RISE; OR, THE YOUNG FLORISTS OF SPRING HILL and WALTER LORING'S CAREER. It may interest collectors since it is not listed in the Stratemeyer bibliographies and has apparently been generally overlooked. It is not a new story, however, but an early hard cover printing of the better known BOYS OF SPRING HILL; OR, BOUND TO RISE and WALTER LORING'S CAREER.

First, examining Rich's BOUND TO RISE with respect to the Mershon printing history, it is a Type R Mershon with an ad for WITH CUSTER IN THE BLACK HILLS (introduction dated August 1, 1902). It has a brown cover with a tent, two boys with guns and three soon-to-be-decimated deer running in the background. Although this cover has been observed on some Type M Mershons (ca. 1901) this book appears to be late 1902-03. The verso says copyright 1900.

In talking with Art Sherman he noted that another collector has BOUND TO RISE (Chapman) in the Type M format with the early Mershon cover showing a boy seated, reading a book by a window. I believe this to be about 1900. It would probably be the earliest hard cover printing of this title or so-called first edition.

Several years ago in my *Dime Novel Roundup* article on the Wanamaker series (published for Wanamaker by Mershon about 1902-06), I noted that BOUND TO RISE, by Chapman, was included in the series, that I considered it part of the "Stratemeyer Controlled" books and noted that in CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS Stratemeyer is named as the author. "Chapman," incidentally, is not given as a penname for Stratemeyer in either the 1918 nor the 1967 edition of NATIONAL CYCLOPAEDIA OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY. I did not notice that BOYS OF SPRING HILL was not included in the Wanamaker series even though it was supposedly part of the Mershon stable and bears a 1900 copyright date. I also didn't make the connection between the two titles.

It appears that we have reasonably hard evidence of the Mershon publication of BOUND TO RISE (Chapman) from 1900 to Stitt times (1905), at which time the original title disappears. It was replaced by BOYS OF SPRING HILL; OR, BOUND TO RISE and WALTER LORING'S CAREER, the identical book except for the changed title, and still bearing a 1900 copyright date. The Stitt edition has the black lined boxes on the title page and the tan cover of the gallant youth standing surrounded by athletic equipment, holding a gun and framed by a red circle. I consider this the first edition of BOYS OF SPRING HILL. Art Sherman's copy is identical to mine except that it has Mershon on the spine showing that Mershon had taken the company back (1906) and was using up the cover stock. Oddly enough I have a Mark Marline LUCK OF A CASTAWAY with the same Stitt cover and C.P.Co. on the spine so Chatterton-Peck Company may also have used that cover for a printing of BOYS OF SPRING HILL. My later Chatterton-Peck BOYS OF SPRING HILL reverts to a plain title page and quite a different cover with "The Standard Library" on the front. Gilbert K. Westgard II has sent me a Xerox copy of yet another cover and spine design of a Chatterton-Peck Company BOYS OF SPRING HILL. It shows three young men in suits strolling along a pathway in a wooded and rocky area, with a lake and hills in the background. (This same design was used on some Rover Boys volumes published by Chatterton-Peck.) "Rambling Boys Series For Young Americans" appears on the lower right portion of the pathway. It seems to show that Chatterton-Peck printed this title (my copy has a Christmas, 1908 date) until the title was sold to Burt around 1909. It is

worth noting that, except for title pages, all copies of BOUND TO RISE and BOYS OF SPRING HILL, regardless of title, were printed from the same plates from about 1900 to at least 1910 and all have a 1900 copyright.

Rich's BOUND TO RISE brings up another question, namely the similarity of this title to Horatio Alger, Jr.'s, BOUND TO RISE. Since subtitles usually did not appear on a cover you can have BOUND TO RISE (Alger) and BOUND TO RISE (Chapman) in front of you (as I have at the moment) along with some well-earned confusion.

Alger's BOUND TO RISE; OR, HARRY WALTON'S MOTTO was first published by Loring in 1873 and reprinted by numerous publishers including, of interest to us, Mershon, Wanamaker, Chatterton-Peck, and Burt, as noted in Bob Bennett's Alger Bibliography. Alger's BOUND TO RISE was also reprinted with no subtitle, or with various subtitles, ...THE STORY OF A COUNTRY BOY, ...OR, UP THE LADDER, ...OR, LIVE AND LEARN, depending on the publisher. Since subtitles seldom appeared on the cover it is conceivable, though doubtful, that Mershon and Wanamaker could have published two books with the same title, but by different authors, at the same time.

When and why did Mershon/Stitt change the title? My guess is this: BOUND TO RISE is a nice title with a positive sound. With the subtitle it was not identical with Alger's title, but it was close. It may well have been picked deliberately in 1900 to trade on Alger's fame, or it may just have been chance. Thinking as well of the D. T. Henty penname for a Mershon Stratemeyer of the same period makes me suspect that the BOUND TO RISE title was more than a coincidence. I would expect that there was confusion then and we know there has been confusion ever since. Whether the confusion was intentional or not we have found that the pre-1905 Mershon and the early Wanamaker versions of BOUND TO RISE were by "Chapman." We must also remember that this was the time period when Stratemeyer was producing the Stratemeyer Alger's. It is also possible that the owners of the Alger BOUND TO RISE publication rights protested. So when Stitt took over Mershon it seemed reasonable to change the title.

As we know from *Publishers Weekly*, Stitt was formed in January, 1905, the business reverted to Mershon in February, 1906, and was finally sold to Chatterton-Peck in October, 1906. William Stitt apparently tried several new approaches in 1905. He introduced new bindings and changed title pages of newly introduced titles by outlining the page sections into three or four boxes. Mershon before Stitt (1898-1905) issued Stratemeyer-Alger completions, but few, if any, genuine Alger's, as far as I know. This changed in 1905 when Stitt issued about 30 Alger's as well as eight Stratemeyer Alger's. Logically this would have been the time when Stitt changed Chapman's BOUND TO RISE to BOYS OF SPRING HILL, and introduced Alger's BOUND TO RISE.

I wrote Bob Bennett for his opinion and he very kindly sent me Xeroxes of his late Mershon Alger BOUND TO RISE, a Wanamaker Alger, THE YOUNG OUTLAW, and a Stitt Alger, JULIUS THE STREET BOY, with "Mershon" on the spine. Bob Williman sent a Wanamaker Alger, HECTOR'S INHERITANCE. In an earlier article for *Dime Novel Roundup* on Mershon-Stitt, I discussed a dust jacket from one of my Mershon Hentys. This Mershon dust jacket lists several titles copyrighted and printed by Stitt in 1905 and therefore it dates from 1906. It is apparent from the listing that in 1906 Mershon continued to offer the Stitt line of books, including Alger's BOUND TO RISE, and Chapman's BOYS OF SPRING HILL. Bennett's BOUND TO RISE has the Stitt boxed title page and dates from 1906. So we have Chapman's BOUND TO RISE, published by Mershon from 1900 to 1905, and Alger's BOUND TO RISE, published by Stitt in 1905, and Mershon in 1906. Bennett's JULIUS THE STREET BOY, with a Stitt title page and Mershon spine, also dates

from 1906, probably a little earlier than his Alger BOUND TO RISE, since it was a transitional volume.

The remaining question is whether Mershon/Stitt ever published BOYS OF SPRING HILL, by Chapman, and Alger's BOUND TO RISE as part of the Wanamaker Young People's Library. My only Wanamaker dust jacket lists Chapman's BOUND TO RISE, and one Alger, OUT FOR BUSINESS, the Stratemeyer completion. It is an early dust jacket from a Type C Wanamaker binding, apparently 1902, or even 1901. The Wanamaker Alger Xeroxes from Bennett and Williman are all Type B, the later style, which could have been done as early as 1903, or as late as 1906. There is even a possibility that Chatterton-Peck continued printing the Wanamaker series into 1908. I lean to 1905 and 1906, since the titles observed are also advertised in Mershon editions on my 1906 Mershon dust jacket. We should also remember that the Wanamaker books were printed from Mershon/Stitt plates. I have absolutely no direct proof, however. Furthermore, I have no evidence as to whether the Wanamaker Library ever included Chapman's BOYS OF SPRING HILL, and Alger's BOUND TO RISE. Since Stitt made the switch, followed by Mershon for nine months, it is certainly possible. As I once noted, with Mershon anything is possible.

To sum up, it appears that Rich Chenu has found errors in Captain Chester Mayo's Bibliography, Deidre Johnson's Bibliography, and Jack Dizer's Bibliography! Seems incredible, but true! The two stories, "The Young Florists of Spring Hill; or, The New Heliotrope," and "For Name And Fame; or, Walter Loring's Strange Quest," from Stratemeyer's *Bright Days*, 1896, were first published in hardcover in 1900 as BOUND TO RISE; OR, THE YOUNG FLORISTS OF SPRING HILL and WALTER LORING'S CAREER, by Allen Chapman, and not as BOYS OF SPRING HILL. The first appearance of BOYS OF SPRING HILL; OR, BOUND TO RISE and WALTER LORING'S CAREER, was published by Stitt, in 1905, even though the title page verso still says copyright 1900. The first or early formats of these two books are as given previously. So a first edition hardcover of the *story* would be BOUND TO RISE, by Chapman, and a first edition of the BOYS OF SPRING HILL *title* would be the 1905 Stitt. The situation is somewhat analogous to the "Working Upward Series" et al which were first published by Allison in 1898-1899, but were reprints of the "Bound to Win" series of 1897 though still with the 1897 copyright dates. In addition, when Stitt changed the BOUND TO RISE Chapman title to BOYS OF SPRING HILL, he added BOUND TO RISE, by Alger, which Mershon later also published. So Mershon actually published both the Chapman and Alger BOUND TO RISE titles, although apparently not at the same time.

To end this "strange eventful history" I might mention that the Burt Chapman reprint, while identical in text, has only THE BOYS OF SPRING HILL; OR, THE YOUNG FLORISTS' SUCCESS as a title. No WALTER LORING in the title although the story was still included in the volume, WALTER should have been left out long ago! THE BOYS OF SPRING HILL is a great story. WALTER suffers by comparison. Badly!

* * * * *

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